

Tropenbos International Viet Nam

Making Knowledge Work for Forests and People



Inside News

- Workshop on Science and Diplomacy
(page 1)
- A successful story of a PhD researcher
(page 2&3)
- Workshop to Develop Sustainable
Central Highlands Landscape
(page 4)
- Workshop to promote sustainable forest
management
(page 4)

Other News

- The Prime Minister Requested
Finalization of Tree Replacement in
2015
(page 4)
- Forestry sector told to focus on
restructuring
(page 5)
- Wood processing sector faces market
risks
(page 5)
- 2015 Call for Applications of the TWAS
Fellowships
(page 6)



Workshop on Science and Diplomacy

From 7 to 12 June 2015, Mr Tran Huu Nghi, TBI Viet Nam's programme director, and several young scientists from developing countries gathered at a course on Science Diplomacy jointly organized by AAAS (The American Association for the Advancement of Science) and TWAS (The World Academy of Sciences) in Trieste, Italy to gain knowledge about the concepts of 'science in diplomacy' and 'diplomacy for science'.

Speakers coming from all over the world gave speeches on these topics. Transboundary issues such as the management of the Nile and Mekong rivers were also put on the table for group discussion. Besides this, the trainees developed their own diplomacy projects in various different fields, including environmental issues, biodiversity, health care and water management, etc. The group projects were then presented for plenary discussion.

TWAS and its partners offer nearly 500 fellowships every year to aspiring scientists from the developing world who want to pursue PhDs and post-doctoral research, while AAAS is an international non-profit organization dedicated to advancing science for the benefit of all people.



A successful story of a PhD researcher

In May 2015, Ha Van Tiep, TBI Viet Nam's PhD researcher, successfully defended his PhD dissertation at Utrecht University in Holland. His research is about 'Forest fragmentation in Viet Nam: Effects on tree diversity, populations and genetics. Following is the story about his four-year research period in Holland.



Obtaining a PhD degree is only in my dreams

I was born and grew up in a poor farm family of six siblings in Kien Xuong district, Northern province of Thai Binh. Upon finalizing my BSc in forestry, I considered such a degree as the highest academic certificate that I would have in my life. Never did I think of higher education, let alone conducting a PhD research abroad. Thus, on receiving the PhD degree from the professor, I had mixed feelings, as if I was dreaming because there were so many times I thought of giving up when facing research challenges when I was in Holland.

Challenges I faced in Holland

My life and its associated challenges in Holland have been like a motion picture in my mind now. Some of the most common challenges I faced are: The difference in learning and teaching approaches between Vietnamese and Dutch educational system, which required me to get to know and familiarize myself as soon as I arrived. In 2014, the final year of my four-year research period, I was allowed to go to the Netherlands to analyze data and write my dissertation. Pro. Dr. Pieter Zuidema, my daily supervisor, told me that the key point of study was to obtain knowledge to better serve for future work, and that the PhD degree could only prove what fields I mastered my knowledge and skills. It happened to me more than once that I could not figure out what a population matrix is and how to apply it in data processing.

Still, I did not dare and even felt embarrassed to ask my supervisor for his help because he told me previously that he would never teach/give lessons to me, but that instead I had to read and reflect myself, and that if there was any point that I failed to understand, I should ask him for his clarification.

When writing my thesis, there were numerous times I felt so disheartened upon seeing my draft papers which were reviewed up to ten times with so many red lines and revisions by my supervisor. Difficult questions from my supervisor made me so nervous and worried because it often took me several weeks to read documents and review my papers. So, with this studying approach, I had to read, to write while my supervisors would remove any inappropriate points/sections and highlighted questions.

What I've learnt

With all my efforts, I finally overcame challenges in my research. I gradually understood research outputs of matrix, how to process data, to write in academic style, to argue research outcomes in a common context. Until now, the draft papers with my supervisor's revisions have been carefully kept in drawers as valuable souvenirs of my life.



My experiences and/or lessons-learnt

What I want to share is that we researchers should not hesitate to invite professors to visit our research site and experiment plots. For many researchers, they may not feel at ease when going to the field with their supervisors. However, from my experience, working with my supervisor in the field gave me the chance to show him my real study conditions. It also helped me find out what and where the problems in my research were for timely interventions and solutions.

(read more on next page)

(be continued)

I invited my supervisor to Viet Nam twice. As far as I remembered, in 2013, I went with him to the field in Nam Dong district, Central province of Thua Thien Hue. I explained to him the way I set up my experiments, showed him the way I measured trees, while he instantly raised questions regarding why I did in this way and not in another ways, and asked which methods I used in measuring and recording data. He also double checked the data accuracy, for instance he asked me to measure the diameter of a selected tree and say out loud the figures, and then asked an accompanying student to do the same task to get the data and compare the two. He particularly insisted on the logical arrangements and data accuracy in research. Thanks to his field visits, I gained substantial confidence towards setting up a research experiment.

For me, what I have attained today stemmed from all of my endless efforts in the past. In addition, I was lucky to be instructed and advised by my supervisor; to be given enthusiastic help from international friends; timely support from TBI's offices in Viet Nam and Wageningen; as well as unconditional love and big encouragement from my family. In short, gaining success in PhD research is not too difficult if we are determined, have a strong will and of course with some luck.

(Ha Van Tiep)



Workshop to Develop Sustainable Central Highlands Landscape

On 2 April 2015, more than 50 State-run management agencies and agricultural businesses gathered at a workshop in the Central Highlands province of Lam Dong to discuss sustainable management of the local landscape.

The workshop was jointly held by the provincial People's Committee, the Institute of Policy and Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development and the Sustainable Trade Initiative (IDH). The aim of the event was to define challenges in the protection and development of the natural landscape in the province and in the Central Highlands at large, looking towards cooperation measures to support management in the region.

Participants were divided into three groups to discuss three broad themes of soil, forest and adaptability. Mr Tran Huu Nghi, TBI Viet Nam programme director, facilitated the thematic discussion on forest and gave a presentation on "Challenges in forest protection in Viet Nam". He highlighted main reasons for deforestation while proposing potential solutions to forest degradation and deforestation, including improved policies, strengthened forest land allocation to communities and application of effective silvi-culture techniques.

The workshop closed with the following key findings:

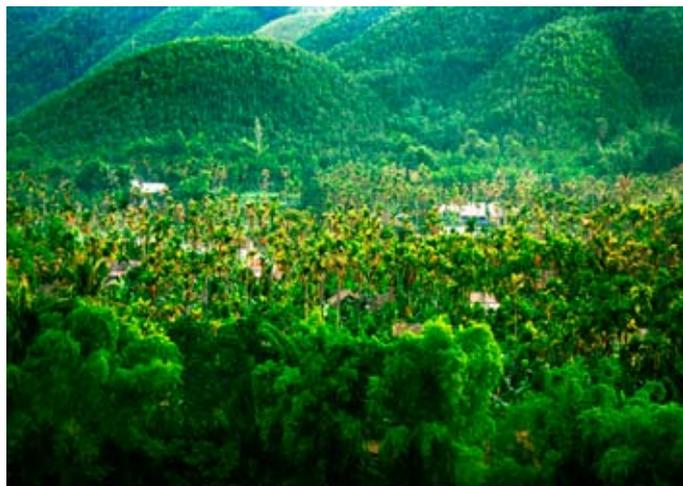
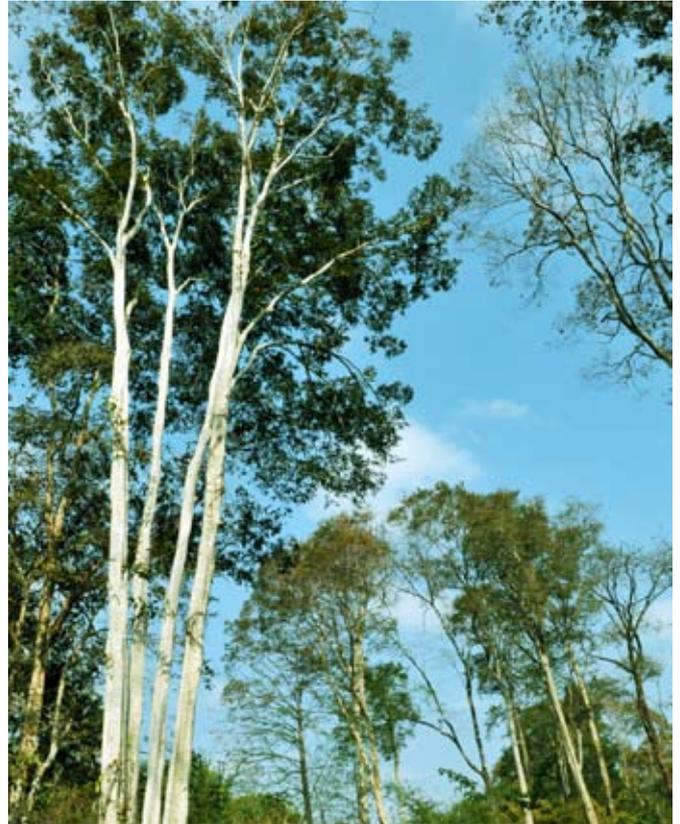
- Three challenges of sustainable development in the Central Highlands are diminishing water supply, deforestation and land degradation.
- Proposed feasible solutions include up-scaling agro-forestry models, usage of organic fertilizer, soil erosion control, and propagating training materials.
- There's a need to set up a coordination mechanism for collaboration between public and private sectors.

Launched in 2014, the ISLA (Initiative for Sustainable Landscapes) has gathered public-private partners to build programmes on the sustainable management of land and water in six vulnerable landscapes in the world, including the Central Highlands of Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, the programme focuses on three urgent issues: diminishing water supply, deforestation and land degradation.

Workshop to promote sustainable forest management

On 29 May 2015, the workshop “Promoting the Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification Schemes (PEFC): Opportunities and Challenges for Cooperative’s Models” was jointly organized by the provincial Cooperative Alliance (VCA) and Center for Climate Change Study in Central Viet Nam (CCCSC). Participating in the workshop were representatives from Viet Nam’s Academy of Forest Sciences, Viet Nam’s VCA, Forest Sub-Departments in Central provinces, PEFC in Southeast Asia, Savotta Forest Management Association (Finland) and research institutes in Viet Nam.

TBI Viet Nam’s representative together with other participants were provided with information on criteria of PEFC for household groups and how to get wood certified, as well as current status of forest certification and future orientation in Viet Nam. Timber businesses highlighted the importance of certified timber and their high demands for such a timber source.



One of the greatest difficulties in forest certification in Viet Nam is legal status of land, and limited awareness of people, shared by a senior of Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. This means that Cooperative Alliance (CA) would face a big challenge in proving the legality of their various types of lands, including forestry land, agricultural land, grass land and land planned for administrative construction, etc. This obstacle would more or less hamper CA in their forest certification efforts in the future.

The Prime Minister Requested Finalization of Tree Replacement in 2015

The Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai requested provincial people’s committees to actively instruct investors who converted forestlands to other land use purposes, especially those converting land for hydro-power plants establishment, to finalize forest replacement in 2015, while giving support in land resource preparation for afforestation.

Reports released by various regions indicated that by December 2014, only 22 out of 55 provinces nationwide planted 7,91 ha of tree replacement. The replacement area in 2014 was 4,648 ha (occupying 35% of the yearly plan), of which 2,445 ha came from hydro power plants (making up 22% of plan), and some 2,203 ha from other related projects (making up 105% of plan).

The limited results in tree replacement, according to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, was because authorities, from local to central levels, as well as investors have not yet given adequate attention to additional tree planting; and forestry agencies neglected their monitoring and inspection in afforestation activities by project investors.

(Source: Viet Nam Plus)

Forestry sector told to focus on restructuring

Chairing a meeting of the National Steering Committee on the Forest Protection and Development Plan for 2011-20 in the Central Highlands province of Dak Lak, Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai requested localities nationwide to focus on forestry restructuring by improving productivity, quality and value.

He also urged localities to strictly implement forest planting projects to replace damaged areas while reshuffling forestry enterprises and rolling out measures to prevent and fight forest fires.

A report by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development blamed negligence for much of the big reductions in forest area and timber reserve in Central Highland provinces.

The main reasons of quick natural timber coverage are conversion of forestlands to over land use purposes such as agricultural production, hydro-power plant construction; forest encroachment; and forest fire.

(Source: Viet Nam Net)



Wood processing sector faces market risks

Viet Nam is currently facing a high market risk as the country's wood sector remains dependent on imported materials while its export markets are becoming stricter in wood origin and legality.

The growth of wood chip processing and exporting has put wood processing sector under threat as the two sectors are competing with each other for domestic input materials, with 80% of which goes to wood chip sector.

During a conference on the role of imported materials and orientations for the wood chip processing sector, many wood processors indicated that exporting wood chips brought about modest socio-economic efficiency while wood chip processors argued that the expansion of the wood chip processing has stimulated the planting of forests and improved the livelihoods of forest-dependent households.

Participants also discussed ways to reduce dependence on imported materials by limiting exports of wood chips and increasing large tree planting.

(Source: Viet Nam Plus)

2015 Call for Applications of the TWAS Fellowships

The TWAS Fellowships programme with over 460 PhD and 150 postdoctoral fellowships available annually in 10 developing countries with 18 programme partners is said to be the largest programme of its kind worldwide.

The 2015 TWAS Fellowships call for applications is now open for majority of the programmes.

For more details on eligibility criteria and to download the guidelines and application forms, see: <http://twas.org/opportunities/fellowships>

For any queries, contact fellowships@twas.org.

Tropenbos International Viet Nam
149 Tran Phu street, Hue city, Viet Nam
Tel: +84-54-388-6211; Fax: +84-54-388-6842
Email: info@tropenbos.vn
www.tropenbos.org

